

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 981

By Sexton J

A RESOLUTION to honor the enduring legacy of songwriter Kim Williams.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly are pleased to honor the memory of those individuals who devoted themselves to creative pursuits, thereby perfecting their craft and producing art that enriched the lives of their fellow citizens; and

WHEREAS, one such individual is the late Kim Edwin Williams, one of Nashville's most lauded songwriters, a man Garth Brooks once called "the definition of what a songwriter should be"; and

WHEREAS, a native of the Poor Valley farming community near Rogersville, Kim Williams was born on June 28, 1947, the son of Lonzo and Mary Frances Smith Williams, who fostered in him a love and appreciation of music; and

WHEREAS, at a young age, he took an interest in songwriting and learned to play guitar; later, he toured with bands from Chicago, Illinois, to Deming, New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, in 1974, Mr. Williams was severely burned in a near-fatal industrial accident; initially hospitalized for six months, he underwent more than 200 reconstructive surgeries over the next ten years; and

WHEREAS, while undergoing medical treatment in Nashville in 1976, Kim Williams enrolled in a songwriting class, thus indulging a passion he had harbored since the age of nine, when he first began composing his own songs; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Williams soon learned he had a true gift for the craft, and in 1989, he signed a five-year staff writing deal with Tree International, now Sony/ATV Music Publishing; he later, through a co-publishing deal, headed Kim Williams Music; and

WHEREAS, during his career, Kim Williams wrote or co-wrote nearly 7,000 songs; his catalog boasts sixteen No. 1 hits and twenty-eight top-ten singles in country, bluegrass, and Christian music; his songs have helped drive sales of more than 154 million albums, tapes, CDs, and videos; and

WHEREAS, during his lifetime and even posthumously, Mr. Williams enjoyed more than 500 cuts, many with major artists; his songs have been recorded by George Jones, Conway Twitty, Kenny Rogers, Joe Diffie, Reba McEntire, Clay Walker, Doug Stone, Brooks & Dunn, Rascal Flatts, Kenny Chesney, Gary Allan, and Tim McGraw, to name a few; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Williams was a longtime friend and frequent collaborator of country music great Garth Brooks; together, the co-writers scored four No. 1 singles: "Papa Loved Mama," "It's Midnight, Cinderella," "She's Gonna Make It," and "Ain't Goin' Down 'Til the Sun Comes Up"; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Williams often found success in the bluegrass genre; his song "Seven Sundays In A Row," recorded by Blue Highway, became a No. 1 bluegrass hit and was nominated for Bluegrass Song of the Year by the International Bluegrass Music Association in 2006; the following year, he repeated the feat, rising to No. 1 on the bluegrass charts and receiving another Bluegrass Song of the Year nomination for "The Last Suit You Wear," co-written with his brother Larry Williams and Larry Shell; and

WHEREAS, many of Kim Williams's songs found a home on Christian radio. Perhaps the most iconic song penned by Mr. Williams is "Three Wooden Crosses," a 2003 Christian music hit that crossed over to the country charts, where it also went to No. 1—the first song ever to have accomplished such a feat; he wrote the song with songwriter/producer Doug Johnson, and when their heart-rending lyrics converged with Randy Travis's warm baritone vocals, a record was made that resonated with listeners the world over; and

WHEREAS, "Three Wooden Crosses" earned the coveted Song of the Year honor from five major music industry associations: the Country Music Association, the Canadian Country Music Association, the Gospel Music Association, the Nashville Songwriters Association

International, and the Academy of Country Music; this unprecedented accomplishment was followed by a Grammy win for the album on which the song was featured, Randy Travis's *Rise and Shine*; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Williams was affiliated with the performance rights organization ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers), which awarded him an astounding twenty-four awards during his lifetime, including Country Songwriter of the Year in 1994; and

WHEREAS, in 2012, Kim Williams was given the ultimate songwriting honor of membership in the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame; his induction into the Hall secured his legacy as one of the greatest songwriters to ever wield a pen in Music City. In 2019, he was posthumously inducted into the East Tennessee Writers Hall of Fame, which honors the region's outstanding writers in every field of literary accomplishment; and

WHEREAS, not only a master song crafter, Mr. Williams was also an exceptional teacher; he served as a mentor through various songwriting organizations, including the Knoxville Songwriters Association, the Nashville Songwriters Association International, and the Smoky Mountains Songwriters Festival in Gatlinburg; and

WHEREAS, Kim Williams overcame harrowing tragedy to cultivate his talents as a songwriter; he ultimately penned some of the most memorable country songs of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Williams wrote in "Three Wooden Crosses" that "It's not what you take when you leave this world behind you, but what you leave behind you when you go," and certainly he himself left behind a veritable boon—a trove of songs that will echo through the ages; it is fitting that we pay tribute to his memory by honoring his many contributions; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we recognize and honor the legacy of songwriter Kim Williams, whose contributions to the craft of songwriting left an indelible mark on country, Christian, and bluegrass music.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.